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Belgian and French Officials To Discuss
Defense Cooperation

Belgian Prime Minister Tindemans plans to test the French government's willingness to cooperate more closely in promoting a European armaments industry when he visits Paris on May 9. Tindemans evidently hopes that France's desire to sell the Mirage F-1/E to Belgium will enable him to prod Paris into joining the Eurogroup in NATO and to make a general commitment to cooperate with other European countries in purchasing and producing weapons systems.

Even if President Giscard were inclined to favor such a step, however, domestic pressures are likely to make it extremely difficult for him to establish overt ties with NATO's military structure.

Brussels first used this tactic last June when Belgian officials suggested if France joined the Eurogroup, the Belgians might select the Mirage as a replacement for the F-104.

Although French officials appear to have written off any chances of selling the Mirage to the other three nations in the consortium--the Netherlands, Norway and Denmark--Giscard apparently still hopes to swing a deal with the Belgians.

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The meeting between Giscard and Tindemans will almost certainly prevent the consortium from holding to its plan to sign an agreement with the US by May 15 to purchase the F-16. The four defense ministers who will attend the Eurogroup meeting in Brussels tomorrow may use the occasion to request a one-month extension.

A final agreement probably will not be reached until after Tindemans and Dutch Prime Minister den Uyl visit Washington later this spring. Norwegian officials, however, are disturbed about these delays and have warned that Oslo might be forced to withdraw from the consortium if a decision is not reached before the summer recess.

The Belgians, meanwhile, have been pushing in the Western European Union for a common armaments policy. In the absence of a structure within the European Communities competent to discuss defense matters, and with France not a member of NATO's Eurogroup, Belgium has long advocated utilizing the West European Union as a forum. Under Pompidou, the French also made some initiatives to revive WEU's role. The WEU initiatives never got off the ground, however, because of the fears of the British and other NATO members that such moves might weaken the Eurogroup.

Belgium's new approaches, apparently carried out largely in London among the representatives to WEU's permanent council, are aimed at integrating Europe's armament

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industries. Brussels may want the WEU members to make a recommendation to the EC, which would then assign integration of the defense industries a priority within the community's nascent industrial policy.

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[redacted] the Belgians wish to integrate the means of production and not, as in the Eurogroup, to harmonize the policies of the customer countries. The initial Belgian goal is a revival of WEU's Standing Armaments Committee to draw up a list of existing armaments industries in Europe.

Brussels' soundings have been immediately directed at gauging sentiment for a formal debate at the WEU Council meeting in London on May 20.

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Portuguese Socialists and Communists Announce
Tentative Reconciliation

Tensions between the Portuguese Socialist and Communist parties appear to have subsided for the moment following an agreement by party leaders to cooperate in Portugal's coalition government and to defend the reforms made since the military assumed power last year.

Representatives of the two parties, including Socialist leader Mario Soares and Communist chief Alvaro Cunhal, met on Monday at Communist Party headquarters to discuss their differences. The joint communique does not call for the formation of an alliance between the two parties, but the agreement should put an end to the increasingly heated exchanges between the parties since the April 25 election. The communique states that meetings between the two parties will continue "with a view to deepening the exchange of views on problems of common interest."

Both Cunhal and Soares have recognized the need for cooperation between the two parties, but previous attempts to paper over their differences have broken down when they found themselves on opposing sides of policy issues. Cunhal told reporters that he hoped that progress toward greater cooperation could be made in future talks.

The Communists' desire for closer cooperation with the Socialists probably reflects the fear of some party members that they have lost some of their influence with the Armed Forces Movement, particularly since the elections showed the Socialists, not the Communists, to be the party of the "people." The Communists

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may also face widening rifts within party ranks between older Moscow-oriented leaders and younger members who prefer to operate along the lines of the more nationalistic West European Communist parties.

There have been indications in recent days that Socialist leader Soares would also welcome a cessation of hostilities, and would prefer to follow a softer line toward both the Communists and the Armed Forces Movement. He has been forced to take a harder stance, however, by party militants who fear that if the Socialists do not press their advantage now, they will lose the benefit of their electoral victory.

The agreement between the two parties was probably strongly encouraged by the Armed Forces Movement which has repeatedly emphasized the importance of unified support for its policies.

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May Day Bombing in Spain Causes Concern

The explosion of a booby-trapped car outside the Madrid stadium where General Franco was attending a rally last week may presage a rash of anti-regime violence. Despite tight security measures, the bomb-laden car was able to be placed in a heavily guarded location without arousing suspicion. If the bomb had exploded half an hour earlier when Franco and his party and masses of people were entering the stadium, there would have been injuries and perhaps even loss of life.

The explosion does not appear to be the work of professionals, such as the Basque terrorist organization ETA. This group has been accused of the assassination of Prime Minister Carrero Blanco who was blown up in his car in December 1973. Although it is not clear that the May Day bombing was an assassination attempt, at the least it served as an anti-regime protest.

Although demonstrations on this May Day and the succeeding weekend were less violent than in recent years, they did include another automobile explosion near Bilbao as well as several fire bombings of business and government establishments in Barcelona and Pamplona. There was one accidental death in Vigo when a policeman attempting to break up a small extremist demonstration accidentally shot an onlooker. Police also broke up a ceremony at the grave of the founder of the Spanish Socialist

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Workers' Party and arrested 60 participants.

Although the stadium bombing was downplayed by Spanish security officers, there is growing concern over the increasing use of explosives for terrorist purposes. Any further incidents could result in a sharp crackdown by the security forces.

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Signs of Growing Tension between France
and Somalia

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Somalia has traditional claims to the area, including the port of Djibouti, because ethnic Somalis make up a large part of the population. President Siad has made it clear that he considers the French presence there intolerable. During a visit to Paris last autumn, Siad asked French President Giscard to grant the Territory's independence. In reply Giscard referred to the 1967 referendum in which 67 percent of the Territory's 37,000 voters voiced a desire to remain French.

More recently, Siad has had some success in enlisting at least the moral support of Arab leaders. During the Arab League Council meeting in late April, Arab leaders passed a unanimous resolution urging independence for the Territory and formed a ministerial committee to make contacts with France.

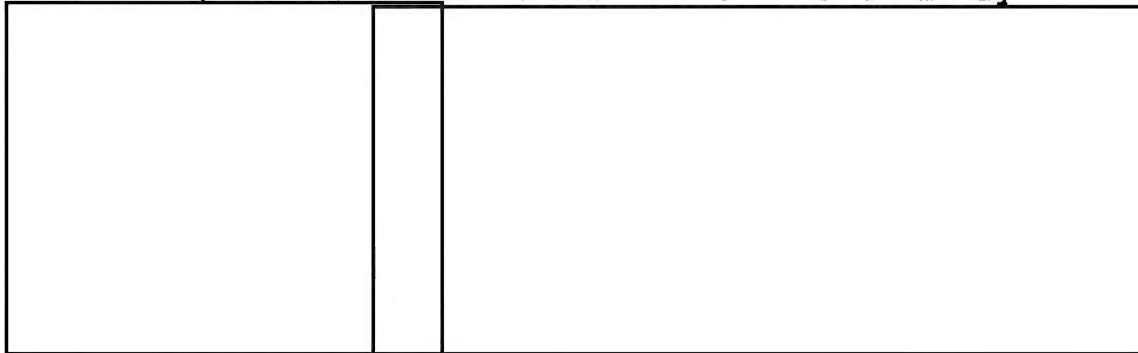
In early February, Siad stepped up his polemics against the French, claiming that people in the French territory were being "massacred, deported and shot" to prevent the expression of a popular desire for freedom.

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France has a strong interest in maintaining its territorial presence and limited political influence in the Indian Ocean area. In addition to sharing a common desire with its Western allies to secure the oil-supply route around Africa from the Persian Gulf, Paris has also shown growing concern that the Indian Ocean not be left in sole control of the US and the USSR. The port of Djibouti will also increase in economic importance once the Suez canal reopens.

Djibouti is the only major French base remaining in the Indian Ocean area. The military



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The French are demonstrating their firm commitment to remain in Djibouti; French forces stationed in the port were strengthened last summer and security precautions along the Somali border have become stringent. One of the most serious problems facing the French forces in the Territory of the Afars and Issas is the infiltration of Somalis who cross the border illegally with the intention of obtaining French citizenship and, later, helping to influence French withdrawal. Somalis are also attracted to Djibouti by the relatively better prospects of employment and higher living conditions. If not strictly controlled, they could soon outnumber the pro-French Afars who cooperate with the French to control local affairs.

In a further exhibition of French commitment to the Territory, the French secretary of state for overseas territories visited Djibouti two

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weeks ago--amidst heavy security precautions. In a major speech, he emphasized French concern for the people of the Territory. An official of the US embassy in Addis Ababa, who also happened to be visiting in Djibouti, noted that French concern was also being expressed more materialistically in the form of new public works projects in and around the city.

The growing tension in Djibouti was also apparent during the French official's visit. The mayor of the city suffered several broken bones trying to calm a violent pro-Somali street demonstration.

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